ON THE EVE OF THE WEDDING.

O love, before we part to-night;
  Before the last "I will" is spoken;
Before the ring has touched my hand,
  Of pure, true, endless love the token;
Before the church with holy rite
  Her blessing on our love has given,
Look straight into my eyes with yours,
  And answer me in sight of Heaven.

Is there within your heart of hearts
  One lingering shadow of regret—
One thought that you have chosen ill?
  Oh! speak—'tis not too late even yet.
Is there is in all this world of ours
  One you have ever known or seen,
Whom, if you had earlier seen or known,
  You would have crowned your chosen queen?

Is there? I pray you tell me now,
  And I will hold you bound no more;
I will not flinch to hear the truth.
  It could not be so sad, so sore,
To know it now, as it would be
  If by-and-by a shadow fell
Upon the sunshine of our home;
  So, if you ever loved me, tell.

I'd hold you pure from blame, dear love,
  And I would leave you free as air
To woo and win that happier one;
  All this for your dear sake I'd bear.
I would not say how I would pray
  That God might have you in his care;
That would be easy—when I think
  Of you, my heart is all one prayer.

But could I join her name with yours,
  And call down blessing from above
On her who had robbed me of my all—
  My life, my light, my only love?
Yes! even that I'd try to do;
  Although my lonely heart should break,
I'd try to say "God bless her!" too,
  Through blinding tears, for your sweet sake.

But looking up into your eyes;
  But, though my own with tears are dim,
I read that in their true, clear depths,
  Which tells me, "You may trust in him."
I will! I will! It needs no words,
  Though yours are flowing warm and fast,
And eloquent with truth and love.
  Forgive my doubts—they are the last.

—*Chamber's Journal.*

WILLOW GRANGE.

A STORY OF LIFE IN EASTERN OREGON.

BY BELLE W. COOKE,

AUTHOR OF "TEARS AND VICTORY."

[Entered in the Office of Librarian of Congress at Washington, D. C., in the year 1880.]

CHAPTER IX.

Bertha's trip down the Columbia was in marked contrast to her delightful wedding tour. She was alone, and the day was dark and gloomy. She was greatly worried about her father, fearing she would find him worse, or even that she might arrive too late to receive his parting blessing. Her husband would have accompanied her if she had not insisted on his returning to their home, for she knew that important business awaited him, and thought she would need his company more when she went home again if her father should not recover. Earle had promised to come for her when she wished it, so they had parted, for the first time since the happy bridal morning, with very sad hearts, hardly knowing, as yet, how long the days would seem that brought no smiles of love or tender caresses.

The gray clouds that hung over the stern cliffs along the river were charged with threatening storms, and seemed in sympathy with Bertha's overburdened heart. She wondered at the severity of the scenery, that had but a few short months since appeared so lovely when luminous with the radiance of sun-born coloring. She watched for the noted places, and found the distance far between them. The river seemed elastic. It stretched and lengthened with every mile, and the "long, long weary day" seemed interminable. She watched the scudding clouds as they sailed over from one side of the huge frowning wall to the other, and wished she might go with their swiftness, and arrive at her father's bedside the sooner.

Finally, after passing the Cascades, the rain began to come down slowly and mistily, and Bertha was driven into the cabin, where she found a number of people going to the Willamette Valley. Some of them were berating the country east of the Cascade Mountains.

One woman said she was afraid the wind would blow her hair off her head if she stayed longer.

Another said she had eaten sand and breathed sand all the time she was at Umatilla, and she would be glad if she ever got to a clean country again.

[illegible] said she wanted to live in the world with [illegible] while *she* lived, and she had been "livin' for [illegible] twenty mile from anybody."

[illegible]y," said one of the listeners, "was ye a [illegible]"

[illegible]" said the woman; "my man was thar, but [illegible] him nobody."

[illegible] thought to herself, "No wonder she [illegible] to go where she will find 'folks' if that is [illegible] she places on her husband."

[illegible] thrill of delight passed through the mind of [illegible] little woman as she thought of her loving, [illegible]-hearted Earle, the man whom she called [illegible]and.

[illegible] was one old lady who was going down to [illegible] valley" to visit her married daughter. She [illegible] Bertha "whar she was from, and whar she [illegible] goin' to," and several other equally impertinent questions, all of which Bertha answered with polite forbearance, as she could not refuse to talk with so old a person on the score of non-acquaintance.

"Ye've been livin' up thar sence June, hev ye, way off from neighbor wimmin, I reckon; an' didn't ye want to see yer mar?"

"Oh, yes; I should dearly love to see her, of course. But I liked it so much on our pleasant ranch that I did not get very lonesome," answered Bertha.

"Land o' massy!" said the old lady. "I don't see how a young creeter like you, purty-lookin' an' genteel brung up, could like it up thar, in sech a out-o'-the-way place. I lived in the town o' Pen'leton, an' I'm a ole womin, an' I was powerful lonesome. I've got two young gals to hum, too. To be sure, Pen'leton ain't to say a big place; but it's got a store, an' a post office, an' two or three whisky shops, an' I declar' to goodness, I never was so lonesome afore as I was las' Winter."

"How old are your daughters?" asked Bertha.

"One on 'em, that's Sabriny, she's goin' on fifteen, an' Dithy is thirteen, an' they hez lots o' beaux. They're mighty smart gals, if they is mine, though I dunno as you'd call 'em han'som. Sabriny's got red ha'r, but it's mighty kinky, an' she's got fair skin an' brown eyes; but her nose spiles her looks a heap. It sticks up too much. Dithy's ha'r is kind o' yaller, but it kinks, too, an' the beaux, some of 'em, goes on about her purty blue eyes an' curly hair. She's the purtiest o' the two, but I reckon Sabriny'll git married afore long."

"Married!" said Bertha. "I thought you said she was only fifteen!"

"Well, so I did," said the old lady. "An' if she ain't married by the time she's sixteen, I'll ship her. I don't want no gal around that ain't smart enough to git married by that time."

Bertha caught her breath in astonishment.

"Why, you needn't look so dumbfounded," said the old woman. "Thar's lots o' beaux up thar, an' it shan't be said that a Nimms gal ain't smart enough to ketch one afore she's sixteen."

Bertha could think of nothing equal to the occasion, but she felt that she must say something, so she replied:

"I do not think it a disgrace not to marry young. I am sure my mother did not want me to marry when I did, and I was twenty."

"Land sakes!" said Mrs. Nimms. "If my gals shouldn't marry afore they was twenty, I should be ashamed on 'em, sure. But mebby some folks is brung up to think different; mighty nice folks does think different sometimes," she added, soothingly.

"I went to school till I was eighteen," said Bertha, "and I think it is much better to defer getting married until one has experience and judgment enough to know what kind of a man she wants, and whether she is getting such an one or not. I do not think such young girls can judge of character, or even know their own minds so early."

"La, now!" said Mrs. Nimms, "that's what I was a tellin' ye, that my gals was smart. They ain't the kind to be tuck in, I kin tell ye. They know who's who, an' if they didn't, couldn't I post 'em? What's the use o' spendin' two or three years a findin' out a feller that you kin find out jess as well in a week? An' as for l'arnin', what use would it be to them, a livin' out in the mountings? They don't need it, an' ain't likely to."

"They may not always live in the mountains," said Bertha. "And besides, learning is a nice thing everywhere; it makes life pleasanter in every place."

"I dunno about that," said Mrs. Nimms. "I've seed folks as had heaps o' book-l'arnin', an' they was the miserblest people that ever God let live. They raved ag'in the Bible, an' sot theirselves up to know more about the creation o' the world than the Lord hisself. Some folks thinks l'arnin' is the only thing a body needs in this world, but I allow thar's some other things nigh on to as good's that. Good sense is one on 'em, an' I'd rather my gals would be peart like than to hev all the l'arnin' thar is, and be no 'count, like some."

Bertha felt subdued. She had nothing to advance which she thought would be in the least convincing, so she leaned back in her chair and looked out of the window.

The old lady began to consider, and feared she had offended Bertha in her tirade, so she tried, in her way, to apologize.

"Not as I knows any harm o' you; no, indeed! nor mean any disrespect to the right kind o' l'arnin'. I reckon it don't take away folks' sense when they hez any to start on; but I've seed so many stuck-up fools, as paid more attention to their grammar than they did to their manners, and would make fun o' a womin who was ole enough to be their mother, an' knowed mighty nigh enough to a bin, jess 'cause she didn't talk grammar like they did; I've seed 'em, an' I don't take no stock in sech. But then I've seed nice, purty-behaved ladies like you, who was as tender-hearted as a lamb, an' didn't think theirselves too good to talk to a ignorant ole womin like me. So don't you be mad at my talk, honey. I didn't mean you. Lawful sakes, no!"

Bertha could not restrain a smile, and made haste to say she was not offended in the least.

"I should like to see your girls," said she. "Do they ever come down to Portland?"

"Oh, yes. Their sister Cathern wants one on 'em to come down this Winter an' go to school, an' their paw says Dithy's got to come when I git hum, an' learn to play the pianny. She's a powerful sweet singer, an' her paw is mighty proud o' her voice, an' says she's bound to be somebody. But I hate to hev her come down all that road alone, an' I don't know how it'll be. I'd a heap ruther we'd git a good teacher up thar. We could pay 'em well an' never feel it. Ef we could git one as could play the pianny, paw says he'd buy one, plum for sartin, ef it did cost."

"How much would you be willing to pay for a good teacher up there?" asked Bertha.

"Oh, we'd pay sixty dollars a month an' board, an' be glad to, ef we could git one as was rale good. But I don't s'pose a genooine lady would stay for no money, it's so lonesome an' pokey up thar."

"I have a friend who is a very nice girl. She is teaching a small private school now in Portland, but she does not make as much as she would be glad to, and perhaps she would go to your place. She is a beautiful player and singer. If you will tell me your daughter's name, perhaps we can make an arrangement that will suit you both."

"Wal, now, I'd be orful glad to git her, ef she's as good as you say. My gal's name is Miss Simpkins, an' she lives onto the same street the Court House is onto, jess two blocks above, in a big tall house on the northeast corner."

"Why, I know Mrs. Simpkins. She is one of our neighbors, and I think she is real nice," said Bertha, with surprise in her voice.

"Law now, dew tell!" said Mrs. Nimms. "You needn' be so struck. Ef she *is* my darter, don't you reckon she might be kind o' nice? An' she's your neighbor, is she? Wal, I'm glad on it. I allow I'll come an' see you when I git down thar, ef it would be 'greeable."

At this reference to the time after her arrival at home, the remembrance of her father's illness came over Bertha like a wave, and her transparent face showed to the acute eyes of Mrs. Nimms the shadow of trouble.

"Why, what grieves ye, honey? Ef ye shouldn't want me——"

But Bertha interrupted her.

"Oh, it isn't that, Mrs. Nimms. It is my father. He is dangerously sick with typhoid fever, and I am going down to see him—if—if he is alive," and the tears rushed to her eyes in a moment. "You will be very welcome, certainly."

"There, now, take heart. Don't be a lookin' on the dark side. Mebby he's a gittin' better this minute. I wouldn't worry about it aforehand, ef I was you. Your maw'll be mighty glad to see ye comin', I venter to say."

"Yes, indeed she will!" said Bertha, with a thrill of joy at the thought.

At this time a loud whistle announced the arrival of the boat at Vancouver.

"Who'd 'a' thought we was so far along!" exclaimed Mrs. Nimms. "I declare to goodness! I'm glad I got acquainted with you, to pass away the time."

Bertha thought pretty much the same thing; but over-careful politeness restrained her from equal frankness, and she only said:

"I am glad we are so far on our journey. I shall soon be home."

The remaining part of the trip was passed in pleasant chat between these two such different traveling companions, and when the boat drew near the wharf at Portland, Bertha felt a greater interest in Mrs. Nimms, and more respect for her, than she could have believed she ever would have felt when she first met her a few hours before.

Bertha's brother Roscoe and her friend Anice Merton rushed on to the steamboat as soon as it touched the wharf. She looked eagerly into their eyes for news of her father; but a glance at her brother showed her that there was no welcome tidings. Still, her first words were:

"How is my father?"

"No better!" said Roscoe, sadly shaking his head; but then his face lighted up as he gazed fondly into his sister's face, and read there the story of her contented love.

"How well you are looking," said he.

"I *am* well—never better in my life," said Bertha. "Well, Anice dear, 'How goes it?'"

"All quiet on the Potomac," said Anice, with a grim sort of half smile, as she repeated one of their old by-words as though she was in a dream. "I cannot realize it is you. I seem to walking in my sleep. I think I am dazed with happiness or something," she added, finally, as they walked on. "I feel as though I should not be really sure of you till I have you in the house and give you a good hug, you old darling!"

Then she started on in a half dancing step, and burst out with a merry laugh, which ended in a half sob of joy.

"Let us hurry on," continued Anice. "I can't seem to keep in much longer. I'm afraid I shall do some ridiculous thing, scream or something, if we don't get in somewhere. O Bertha!" she went on, as she hugged her arm, "is it really your very own self, whole and well?—and sweet as ever," she added, under her breath.

"No, I am not whole!" cried Bertha. "Only the half, and by far the smaller half, is here. The rest is far to the eastward, driving home the sheep just now. But you are welcome to what is here, just as welcome as ever," and she slipped her arm around Anice's waist as they entered her father's gate and whispered, "Oh, Anice, he is *so* good!"

"I know it," said Anice. "I read it in your happy eyes."

Bertha's mother met her at the door with a face flooded with tears.

"My darling child!" she said, and fell on her neck.

"My father!" said Bertha. "Will he know me?"

"No, dear," said her mother, with a sob. "He has not known any of us for several days. But if he was conscious, the doctor says it would not do for you to see him."

"Oh, I *must* see him," said Bertha. "I could never stand it not to see him."

"Yes, you shall," said her mother. "Only you must be as calm as possible. He calls for his 'little girl' all the time, and I am sure it would do him good to know you are here, if he only could."

Bertha entered her father's darkened room on tiptoe, knelt by the bedside, and kissed his hot lips with her cool, fresh ones, repressing her tears as much as possible. After a few moments, she went to her old room, removed her traveling suit, and finding an old comfortable wrapper in her closet, she put it on, together with a pair of quiet slippers, and, after bathing her eyes, she went to her father's bedside and sat down, with a look of calm determination on her face, that said, "Here I take my place, and I will resign is to no one."

[To be continued.]

A LEAF FROM A TEMPERANCE JOURNAL.

"Are you the lady what takes the pledges?"

These words were addressed to me by a pretty little innocent-faced boy, as I stood in the room where the Band of Hope was assembled.

"No," I replied, "but I will show you the lady. Come with me." And he followed with his little sister.

His brown eyes were wet with tears as he looked up, appealingly, saying, "I broke the pledge. I am afraid they won't take me back again."

"Oh, I'm so sorry," I said. "Come, sit down here, and tell me all about it. How was it?"

"I was going," he said, "past a store, and a man gave me some candy, and made me drink lager beer. But I'm very sorry," he said, as the tears streamed down his face.

The Secretary heard the story, and then took out one of the society's pretty little pledges, with the rose in the corner, and asked him if he could write his name.

"I can't write, but I can print it. I printed it before. Maybe that ain't so good as writin', and that's the reason it got broke,"—as he looked up doubtfully, but earnestly.

But the lady thought printing would do, and in plain, big letters the little hand traced his name. Who but an incarnate spirit of evil could tempt a child like this to enter the scorching path of intemperance? Yet this is not the first nor the second time that our efforts to guide the dear children into paths of peace and pleasantness have been interfered with by those who would beguile them into evil.—*Ex.*

HOW CHICKENS GET OUT OF SHELLS.—Take an egg out of a nest on which a hen has had her full time, carefully holding it to the ear; turning it round, you will find the exact spot which the little fellow is picking on the inside of the shell; this he will do until the inside shell is perforated, and then the shell is forced outward as a small scale, leaving a hole. Now, if you will take one of the eggs in this condition from under the hen, remove it to the house or other suitable place, put it in a box or nest, keeping it warm and moist, as near the temperature of the hen as possible (which may be done by laying it between two bottles of warm water upon some cotton or wool), and lay a glass over the box or nest, then you can sit or stand, as is most convenient, and witness the true modus operandi. Now watch the little fellow work his way into the world, and you will be amused and instructed as I have often been. After he has got his opening, he commences a nibbling motion with the point of the upper bill on the outside of the shell, always working to the right (if you have the large end of the egg from you, and the hole upward), until he has worked his way almost around, say within one-half of an inch in a perfect circle; he then forces the cap or butt end of the shell off, and then has a chance to straighten his neck, thereby loosening his legs somewhat, and so, by their help forcing the body from the shell.

PROFITS OF A CHICKEN RANCH.—Mrs. J. J. Findley, of Green Valley, this county, has done so well in the chicken business this season that we are moved to give the figures, as taken from her daily record, to show what may be accomplished in a short time with a few hens; On the 1st of January, 1880, she started with 100 hens. She did not build any house, letting them roost on the fences, in the trees, or where they might choose, and has taken *no* special care of them. The hens are mostly of the white and brown Leghorn, crossed with the white Polands, and were nearly all Spring pullets when she bought them. From the 100 hens Mrs. Findley has sold 800 dozen eggs in the San Francisco markets, which have averaged her about twenty-four cents a dozen. This number does not include the eggs used in her household, nor those set to raise chickens from. Since the grain began to ripen she has not fed the hens a thing, and the cost of feed prior to that time will not exceed $50. Mrs. Findley has had the care of the hens herself, and has kept an accurate record of all transactions in relation to the business, and thinks she can carry off the prize for good laying hens and the quantity of eggs for one season.—*Solano Republican, October 15th.*

Middle-age is the one great test of a man's character. It is the five-barred gate which rises suddenly before him in the middle of his journey. Some men walk calmly up to it, open the lock, and pass through with the same equable, steady step as before; others spring over it and canter on, frisky, reckless and ridiculous as in youth; while some, principally women, creep under it, and go smirking along, pretending they have never yet encountered it. Single men and women like these, who ignore their years and try to be young with the young, have been butts for ridicule since time began; boys and girls are always savagely merciless on them. And yet, this made-up, waltzing old beau, this wan, worn woman, coveting notice, aping the airy graces of rosy girls, how tragical they are! They have somehow missed their birthright. They have not secured the great possessions which make the middle age solid and full, and must they give up their youth, too? Shall they have nothing? The desperate hold which they keep on it is not so laughable when one comes to think of it.